



15th February 2024

14U WWBA Tour

Dear parents and players,

It is with much anticipation that I share with you an initiative co-created with our State Association partners (SAP) and The Perfect Games to advance the development of talented young players from across the country.

Background

During the course of 2019, Baseball Australia (BA) through a consultation process with the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) and SAP's reviewed the entirety of the Performance Pathways arm of baseball in Australia.

Performance Pathways players are defined as the level in which players have demonstrated skills and attributes that separate them from their peers, with an ambition to go on and perform at competition levels at a National, International or Professional level.

Performance Pathways competitions (PPC) are the events that support these players at a developmental National or International level, such as the Australian Youth Championships, the Under 16 & Under 18 National Squads, the Under 18 World Cup Team.

Performance Pathways Programs (PPP) are the underpinning programs delivered by our SAP to fast-track and prepare Performance Pathways athletes for Performance Pathways competitions.

This is a clear delineation from Little League (in all forms) that is the participative arm of our sport.

The review conducted in 2019 identified gaps within PPC's and PPP's that could be improved in order to increase the depth and breadth of player development across the country.

Over the last few years, BA has worked back through the age groups on the implementation of strategic approaches to improve the outcomes for Performance Pathways players, and to identify and support these players at a younger age.

The remaining gap identified in 2022/23 was the transition of talented players from the Junior League age groups into the PPP's. Specifically, it has been identified that Nationally directed support of 14 year olds and the coaches that surround them will greatly accelerate their progression into the U16 Australian Youth Championship cohort and beyond.

This has led BA to consider what interventions could be created to address the following:

- Accelerated development for talented 14 year olds from across the country
- Accelerated development for identified development coaches from across the country
- Implementation of newly acquired skills (players and coaches) into high level competition environments



Opportunity

In order to deliver on the outcomes identified above, BA has assessed a number of opportunities, both domestically and internationally to create a program structure that is beneficial for both players and coaches.

This has seen the following put into place:

- Through the SAP's, identify and support talented 14 year olds (and exceptional 13 year olds) for accelerated development between Easter and July
- Through the SAP's, identify and support talented coaches for accelerated development between Easter and July
- Embed both players and coaches into a systemized winter program strategically led by BA, and locally delivered by our SAP's
- Focus on 'skills that scale' for performances at a National, International or Professional level
- Mentoring and support of coaches developing talented players across a winter program
- Entry of Australian teams to play at the Perfect Game World Wood Bat Association Championship in early July; the principle age group wood bat competition for this age group in the USA annually

This program will see players and coaches stretched from their current level of ability in order to develop *individual* performance characteristics to be tested at a premier level of *team* performance.

We expressively highlight both individual and team performances to ensure that we strike a balance of the wholistic development required in order to produce high level baseball players.

Structure

Over the last three months, BA with the SAP's have been refining the structure of the winter program and tour. The key information for you is as follows:

- Players born after May 1st 2009 are eligible to play in the event
- Expressions of Interest for the program to be circulated and responded to by the end of February
- Commitments and deposits to be made by the end of March
- Winter programming to commence post Easter
- Payment in full to be made by mid May*
- The tour is to depart Australia July 10th for Hoover Alabama USA via Atlanta Georgia
- Teams (approx. five for 2024) will compete in the 14U World Wood Bat Association event in Hoover concluding at the latest on the 19th of July dependent on progression (min six days of tournament competition).
 - o Additional games have already been sourced should teams be eliminated
- All attendees to depart to Australia on the 20th of July



It is very important to note that the preparation for this event conflicts with age relevant Little League schedule. As such, there has been significant consideration given to this conflict and how we may ensure that the integrity of the age relevant Little League programs remain in place.

With that in mind, the pre-requisites of accepting an invite for this tour are as follows:

- All players must make themselves available for their age relevant Little League Championships
- Should your charter progress, you would be required to make themselves available for the National age relevant Little League Championship
- Should your charter progress to the age relevant Little League World Series, if you must make the choice between this tour and the Junior League World Series, you must prioritise age relevant Little Leagues.

The prioritization of playing with your charter, and your friends precedes this Performance Pathways Program activity, consistent with the values that BA and the States want to develop baseballers for life, and this requires the respecting of grass roots baseball.

Fear not! If the above applies to you, there is still plenty of time to develop and harness your skills without the competition arm of this activity.

*should players have to withdraw due to the scheduling clash, a full refund will be on offer

#it is noted that some families maybe in the financial position to undertake both activities. This is your choice to make. BA will only insist on Junior League being the priority

Logistics & Costs

At the time of writing, it is anticipated that five teams will be entered for the 2024 14U World Wood Bat Association event from Australia. The breakdown of the team is as follows:

- 22 players per team
- 2 coaches per team
- 1 EO per team
- 2 additional support staff for teams
- 1 coach development lead

The current estimate of costs is \$7,500 per player, noting the following:

- Current quotes for airfares sits at approx. \$3,500 per traveler ex the Easter Coast of Australia, inclusive of domestic flights in the USA
- Ground transportation is being quoted by tour bus companies. This is to minimize risks to the travelling party
- Meals and accommodation to be provided for the duration of the tour
- Uniforms are to be determined once the teams have been finalised
- Travel insurance coverage for the entire touring party



BA and the SAP's realise that money is tight for all families at this time. Where there is a capacity to reduce costs such as the use of Frequent Flyer Points or through the use of existing uniforms, then this will be accommodated within the tour levy.

Process moving forward

We are collectively working with some tight timelines for this tour. As such, the following will be in place:

- Call for expressions of interest for the program ASAP to the state association (they will provide an appropriate contact point)
- Closing of the EOI's February 29th 2024
- A presentation will be delivered on Monday March 4th (virtual) where questions in relation to the tour may be asked
- Final pricing of the tour to be provided shortly after based on the EOI's and team entries
- Commitments and deposits to be made by the end of March
- Winter program commences post Easter
- Payment in full to be made by mid May*
- The tour is to depart Australia July 10th

Should you have any questions in relation to this tour and the supporting activities, please direct them to your State Association contact as a starting point, and they will share back to me in a manner in which I can address common questions on mass.

In closing, BA is extremely excited about this opportunity, and we very much look forward to working with you as families, and our SAP's in order to execute a wonderful development and life experience.

Kind regards

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